

Two Point One

by Z-X20

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Summary: The Spartans found an abundance of natural resources, but little else in the Forerunner Construct known as Shield World. But later they found a way out. There they found another Halo Ring, and another infestation. The Flood is here once again.

## 1. Prologue: Gravemind

Alright, I'm going through a horrid writer's block, I decided to write this. I'm going for a page a day and, hopefully, I'll be updating this biweekly. There is no planning for this story. Any suggestions, questions, or things you want to see, tell me and I'll work them in.

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Prologue

Gravemind

"\_Do you think John's still out there? I mean, alive."\_-Kelly-087

Delia stood, her heavily modified 99E-S2 in hand. Her favorite weapon. A gift from her mother's good friend, Linda. The 'long rifle' as her brother had called it was modified to hold a slightly larger clip, have a more accurate scope, and, should the first clip fail, had a switch, called the 'Phoenix Burst' which would immediately load another clip, pre-loaded into the side of the weapon.

Her trigger finger twitched, almost setting off the first round and giving away her location. She cursed under her breath and continued to scout. Her squad needed the Intel. Her mother's speed really didn't go very well with her position though.

Ah, her mother. She was called Blue-Two by her friends. Or, the closest thing she had to them. Delia always wondered if her any of

the SIIs or SIIIs had anything that could be called friends. Though the SIIs were a bit more, secluded, seemed to be the word. Going as far as to never leave their 'Hammer' armor.

"Alpha-one. This is Golf zero niner zero. Hostiles coming from lower level. Switch to BR79 SR. Long rifle's clip won't help." Her squad leader was obviously better at her job than she was. She switched to the modified Battle Rifle on her back and examined the area. Soon, she found what her squad leader was warning her about. A multitude of infection forms. They were traveling in groups of five. Ever since the Gravemind developed, they always seemed to work in groups of 5 or 10.

"Golf zero niner zero, this is Alpha-one. Hostiles traveling in groups of 5. Permission to engage. If permission is denied, permission to take tactical command and issue the order to fall back and place a quarantine on Forerunner planet ten-two, section Charlie Quebec Charlie one-twelve-one."

"Permission granted and permission denied. Give 'em hell Delia."

Delia was about to speak after hearing the 'permission denied' but was silenced by her squad leader calling her Delia. It was something unusual for him considering how stolid while inside the 'Hammer'.

She pressed the visor of her S variant helmet to her BR79 and fired one round to the first infection she saw, taking out a group of four. The fifth ran around randomly, confused. "Golf zero niner zero. Behavioral note: taking out four of five in an infection squad causes the fifth to act erratically."

"Noted. Leave the fifth be. We'll set up cameras on the lower level to monitor it while you take out the other squads. After said squads are taken out, you may take tactical command."

"Acknowledged." She fired another round, this time taking out all five with the chain reaction. She continued till there was just the one remaining.

"Hostiles downed. Switching comm to Delta-Five to request pickup. Are the cameras set up?"

"Roger, Alpha-one."

"Casualties?"

"None."

"Good. We don't need another body added to the list of hostiles. Delia signing off." She breathed and pressed a button on the side of her Helmet. She blinked, took a breath, and prayed that things would go well until evac got there. Though her squad leader regrets the belief that she'd never know that things didn't.

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Alright, as before, I've made some changes. I've added nothing to affect length though, mainly because I think the length of this is

perfect. Though, I would like to go over the naming process.

Sierra 2.1/3.1 This is decided by which group's augmentations are more prominent. A 2.1 will be closer to a Spartan-II while a 3.1 will be closer to a Spartan-III.

> The first number will represent ONE of the child's parents. Which one depends on the augmentations that show through, gender, and various other things that are never worried about. If a decision isn't reached, they are named in honor of a fallen Spartan instead (G188-Dante for example)<br> The second number (designation) is which graduate the Spartan was. These began with 051 in honor of Lieutenant Commander Kurt Ambrose. For example, 100 would be the 49th graduate to come from the Spartan-2.1/3.1 training.

> The name is chosen by the parents.<p>

## 2. Chapter 1 Hammer

I don't own Halo. I do own my characters

### Chapter 1

Hammer

"\_Die? Didn't you know? Spartans never die."\_ Lieutenant Commander Kurt Ambrose

Sierra 2.1 G099/059, or as the good doctor called him, Arthur was sitting down in front of his room's television. His R variant Hammer armor was in a glass case behind him. He couldn't help but think that he'd made the wrong call. That it was his fault that Delia was... He couldn't think about it without a tear coming to his eye. It was all his fault. Delia would become a Combat Form. He'd have to fight his best friend, squad sniper, and the finest Team Leader in all of Battalion 3, Delta Company.

He stood up and walked out of the room and into the main hallway. His weapons were mounted on the wall as he walked out. A firebomb grenade, a modified MA6D Assault Rifle, and a custom M6T Magnum. He couldn't help but think of grabbing the firebomb and throwing it against the ground, the flames promising that he'd meet Sierra two papa one Delia again. But he knew it wouldn't do any good.

First, his old squad leader, Sierra two papa one zero eight seven slash seven two and now his sister. If he hadn't taken the time to set up the cameras. If he hadn't given the order to leave the one remain. If he had told her to take tactical command. Then at least one the two people would still be here. If he'd told her to use the long rifle. The power from the shot would've taken out the fifth infection form in the squad.

But there was nothing he could do now except hope the good doctor could find a cure. Vital threat foxtrot india tree was the top priority. There were two options. Extermination or cure. While extermination was impossible without Xenocide and the cure was impossible without a sample, which would lead to a Xenocide.

He couldn't help but remember his former squad leader's final words to him while he was human. \_'Hey Apprentice. Get out of here. I can handle this. And if I don't, maybe John will come after me. Report me

as MIA and then save me from my life. Like mother always said he would.'\_ Though, months

\_ 'A grave is filled, once empty. \_

\_ Through all life and love and time. \_

\_ One day, you will join me here, \_

\_ And life will be forever yours. \_

\_ Till then, I will search for you. \_

\_ Find me, and I will give all. \_

He couldn't help but wonder that maybe, \_maybe, \_Delia was happier as a combat form. Maybe she would be able to keep control. Maybe help them find a cure. It wasn't likely but it could happen.

He walked into the good doctor's lab. Dead combat forms were on every table. Dissected to the point where, if she hadn't done the cutting, the good doctor would never know that they were combat forms at one point in time. Every organ was sliced out, every spinal cord was severed. Some were burnt to a crisp, some were surgically separated from their infection form. But all were dead and that was what was important.

He whistled six notes and waited.

"Oly Oly Oxen Free. All out in the free. We're all free."

"Do you think she's okay?"

"No. "

"Are you any closer to a cure?"

"No. "

"Why do I come here?"

"I don't know." She then whistled the six notes.

"Thank you doctor."

"No problem Arthur."

Spartan 2.1 G099/059 walked out of the lab on Naval Base Foxtrot, Codename: Rat's Nest. Ironic name. There were no rats there. Only humans. Though they seemed to be like rats in a maze, darting around, looking for the cheese that would save their comrades from eternal life. Each of them with their own specialized form of the infamous Hammer armor that would provide them with the protection needed for one sixth of the flood infestation they were facing.. The proper name for it was MJOLNIR Powered Assault Armor Mk V-VI Custom but no-one had the patience to say it or the linguistic capacity to pronounce MJOLNIR.

Well, the Sierra 3.1s were exceptions. They had what were known as MJOLNIR Semi Powered Assault Armor. Though, a lot of times, it was

just called by it's precursor's name Semi Powered Infiltration armor or SPI. It wasn't as powerful as the MJOLNIR but it had it's advantages. For example, it had two modes. A camouflage mode which made it easier to sneak up on something and an Assault mode which made it so that it could take more enemy damage thanks to Energy Shield technology. Thing is, that because of the lack of a consistent power source, the shielding lasted for 10 minutes or till a sniper bullet's worth of damage was done to it. Still worked for long enough to take out a good number of enemies, retreat, wait, and pop your head out again.

He walked by Delia's room. Or, her old room. Inside was an empty bed, a glass case, a set of clothes for when she was off duty and her Hammer S variant Helmet.

He walked by a few of the newest Spartans. All of them were about 3-4 feet tall, between 100 and 117 pounds, and around the age of 6. Arthur looked at them as they walked by, one in particular standing out to him. He was at the lowest end of the weight spectrum and he looked particularly fragile for a young SPARTAN. Probably a tree-papa-one. Even still.

"Recruit, Attention," he said, causing the boy, who knew the 19-year-old squad leader was staring at him, to halt and stand straight up.

"What's your name, recruit?" Arthur asked. In addition to him being the smallest of them, he had freckles and brown hair. Two features the squad leader hadn't noticed before.

"Full, first, or identification?" the boy responded after a moment of thought, revealing a gap between his front teeth.

Arthur smiled. He liked this kid. "Full."

"SPARTAN Recruit 2.1 John Bravo 091."

"What's your designation?"

"Designation?"

"Designation. What number comes after the B091."

The boy took a deep breath and replied, "I haven't received such honor yet."

"Ok. Tell me, how's your mother?"

The Recruit was shocked. That wasn't the reason that the Petty Officer First Class had stopped him, but the timing on it seemed as if it had been.

"Answer my question recruit. How's Lucy doing?"

"Lucy, sir?"

Arthur thought for a moment. "My mistake. Forgot. Lucy would be your grandmother."

"What does this have to do with anything, sir?"

"Don't call me sir. I work for a living. Has your grandmother ever spoken to you or?"

"No, sir-"

"Stop right there. Recruit, repeat the last three sentences in our little talk."

"Don't call me sir." That was all he said..

"Nothing else?"

"I work for a living. Has your grandmother ever spoken to you?"

"Good. Now, you will refer to anyone wearing an eagle and no stars as?"

"I don't know, sir."

"I said, 'Don't call me sir.' Have you gone through basic training?"

"Just started today, sir."

"How many times do I have to say-"

"Sir, I don't know what else to-"

"Now, you're just interrupting me. You will refer to me as Petty Officer, understood?"

"With all due respect sir, that sounds bad."

"Do not call me sir. Is that understood."

"Yes, Petty officer."

"Now, be on your way. Enjoy your first day."

The kid moved as quickly as possible. He was scared the Squad Leader would repeat the experience. "Be on your way kid. Train hard, live well. You'll go far. Maybe you'll be the one to save us from ourselves." He knew that, for the rest of the day anyway, his classmates would make fun of him, taunt him, do everything in their power to break him after a crack had been made. If he were a real SPARTAN then he'd go through it and come out stronger.

"Wear the Hammer proudly," he said to himself, hoping that one day those words would reach him.

Arthur took a breath, looked at the recruit and walked away.

(Time Break)

Spartan 2.1 G099/059 sat at his desk, filling out the report for Mission CQC009: Inspection of Quarantine Zone Codename: Isolation. He needed to finish it before his Platoon Leader got back from his meeting. Normally he'd be more worried about having to fill out the

paperwork for the casualty during the mission. But he'd gotten it out of the way first so it wouldn't be fresh on his mind when he went to see the good doctor when he was done.

There was a knock at his door.

"Come in," he said, as he wrote the words 'Foxtrot Tango Tree.'

A girl walked in. She was small. Very small. Frail wouldn't even begin to imply Arthur's initial impression. "Are you Petty Officer First Class Sierra 2.1 G099/059?" she asked.

"Yes. I'd ask if I can help you but I have a feeling you're the good doctor's aide coming to report something to me." He looked up from his paper work, putting down the final period as he did.

"Not exactly Petty Officer," she said, matter-of-factly, "The doctor did send me but I am not her aide. I'm Apprentice Sierra 2.1 104/100. The doctor specifically requested I be assigned to your squad."

"Requested from who?"

"Master Chief Petty Officer Mendez."

"You're fucking with me. I lose the best sniper in the battalion and they give me the frailest Spartan in the history of the academy. Number 100. Didn't your class just graduate today?"

"Yes, Petty Officer."

"Alright. Listen then. You're my new sniper. Got no other choice on that one. Because of that, you get a set of the S variant. We don't have one readily available so you'll be Alpha Whiskey Lima on the next few missions." He knew he wouldn't be sent on one with an incomplete squad. "That's Absent with Leave if you didn't get that. You know the basic rules of squad structure and military ethics and what-not but I only three things I ask you do. Wear the Hammer proudly. Never talk back to me or a Team Leader. And whatever you do, don't get yourself killed. Understood?"

"Yes, Petty Officer."

"Alright then. My name's Arthur. You have permission to refer to me as such when we are not in Hammer or in uniform. Sit down. You'll be here a while."

She sat down and looked at him, waiting for him to speak.

He signed the paper and set his pen down. "What? You're not to going to introduce yourself?"

"I just didn't expect you to want me to."

"Why would I give you permission to call me by my first name and not do the same for you?"

"I don't know Petty Officer."

"Then introduce yourself."

"My name is Holly, sir."

Arthur bit his lip. He'd heard the name before. Holly was, supposedly, the name of the one to get the highest marksmanship score since Delia. And was barely topped by that. "Alright Holly. Tell me a little about yourself." He knew the first thing she'd do was brag.

"I finished basic training a few weeks ago. I've spent about 3 hours a day working with the good doctor since then till today, at which point, I'm guess you'll have daily training so it'll be out of the question. I received a score of 298 on my final marksmanship test."

"Well, 298. That's impressive. My last sniper had a perfect 300, though. Why don't you?"

"I got nervous, Pe-..., I mean Arthur. I was told I had a chance of tieing the highest score in the academy and I choked. I ran out of breath while I was centering the last shot and I was shaking too hard for, even without the follow through, to get a 10. Is that alright?"

Arthur smiled. "Yes, it's fine. Actually it's perfect. You've given me the best news I've had since Delia died."

"And what's that, Arthur?"

"That you're human. That you make mistakes. That even though, you came in here overconfident, cocky, and a braggart, you're still flawed. And, not only that, but you know you're flawed and willing to fix it. I'm more willing to be proud of having a 298 Sniper willing to learn than having a 300 sniper who isn't. Welcome to the squad, Holly."

"Thank you, Petty Officer."

"Don't call me Petty Officer. You've earned it."

"Thank you Arthur."

"Now, if you'd like to meet your Platoon Leader, you're welcome to stay. Otherwise, you're dismissed."

"I'd like to stay, thank you."

"Good to know. Here's a tip though. The PL isn't nearly as loose as I am out of uniform. When he's here, if nothing else, don't call me anything but Petty Officer, don't call him anything other than sir. Alright."

"Okay."

"Good. Now then. Do you think you can get a perfect score if you tried the test again."

"I know I can."

"Really. Would you like for me to set up a time for you to try while



you're waiting for your armor."

"Yes, please."

"Alright. I'll talk to the good doctor about it first chance I get."

"Thank you."

Arthur simply nodded and smiled. \_'So. The new recruits keep getting better and better.'\_

(Time Break)\_

> <em>

"Shipman Spartan 3.1 058/073 reporting." The SPARTAN was standing at the position of Present Arms with the crispest salute Arthur had ever seen.

"Skip the formalities Andre, we're not going to be in uniform for a long while." The Petty Officer First Class said, leaning back in his chair.

"Whatever you say Arthur. What is it you needed?"

"Well, recently, your former Team Leader died."

"Yes. What about it?"

"You don't seem to upset about it."

"Well, I've learned that you have to move on. Get up from a fall and keep walking, if you will."

"Good to know you have that sort of attitude. But if I recall correctly, didn't you once tell one of your squad mates that you liked Deila."

"Yes sir, but I fail to see what you're-"

"Are you going to tell me that you're so battle hardened that you can't show a bit of remorse for someone you care about."

"Well, sir, I believe you've misinterpreted the word 'love. When I said that I meant that I enjoyed having her as my Team Leader."

"Even so, it's shocking that you haven't shed a tear...Well, either way, I guess that due to this, you won't mind so much when she's replaced."

"What do you mean?"

"Even if the Squad can function with only 8 members, we need a sniper. I've requested a new member. The good doctor's arranging it now."

"But Petty Officer," he started. Arthur smiled when he did. He was right. "How is it possible to find as capable a Sniper and Team Leader as Delia?"

"Well, a Sniper. I already have. Before I asked you to come here, I spoke with the Apprentice who will be taking her place. Frail little girl. Her name's Holly."

"But what about a-"

"I'm getting to that. Who would you recommend?"

"Well, Petty Officer. I believe Maria or Alex would be best for the position."

Arthur's smile grew. "Take off your rank."

"What?"

"You heard me. The brass on your recreational clothe's collar. Take it off."

Andre hesitated before taking off the chevrons on his shirt and setting them on the desk.. "I'm sorry Arthur. I guess that I didn't live up to your standards."

"No you didn't," the Petty Officer said, grabbing the Chevrons from the desk and setting down another Rank Insignia. One Chevron and an Eagle. "You've exceeded them."

Andre was silent.

"Go on. Take them. They're your's."

"But Arthur. I can't. There's no way that."

"Yes you can. That's why I chose you. I've talked to Maria. I've talked to Alex. Both recommended you."

"Thank you Petty Officer."

"Don't thank me. Just grab your ranks. I have an assignment for you though."

"What is it?"

Arthur pulled a folder from under his desk and set down in front of him. "This is the paperwork concerning your promotion. Take it. Sign it. Give it to the good doctor. Tell her that I wanted you to meet Holly before she got her Hammer."

"Okay. Anything else?"

"Yeah. Tell the good doctor that the last page has a form that I'd like for her to look at sometime before the squad is put back on active duty."

"Okay Arthur. Thank you."

"Don't thank me. You've earned it."

(Time Break)

Doctor Catherine Halsey was sitting at her desk, reading through the papers that had recently been put in front of her. In particular, a document requesting a retake of the marksmanship exam for a recent graduate: Apprentice Spartan 2.1 104/100 - Holly. Not that she wouldn't approve of it but there were a few odd things about it. 1: It was the second highest scoring marksman in the Academy's history. 2: The reason give for the request was anxiety. 3: The paper was signed, not by the requestor, but by her squad leader. And 4: A side comment was written in the margins saying that he wanted her rifle to be calibrated in reverse of normal.

The last one was especially odd because it wouldn't just alter her score, it would screw it over. If Holly were to use a rifle with the requested calibration (she usually held the rifle in a position where it would need to be moved 4 clicks to the right), a perfect 300 score would turn into a 180. In addition to that, there was an extra comment, requesting that a lock be placed on the rifle she used so that it would be impossible to adjust until she left the range.

The god doctor sighed and stared at the paper, wondering about what Arthur had in mind for the frail girl she'd assigned to his squad. She took a deep breath, pulled out a pen and wrote Charlie Hotel in the largest letters possible before taking a moment to feel remorse for what Holly was about to go through. And after that, began considering religion.

After all, at this point, all she wanted was forgiveness.

She sat in the room by herself. All papers signed. All jobs for the day done. Andre had just left. Holly wouldn't be back till tomorrow. Arthur was briefing his spotter. She bit her lip and hummed a set of six notes over and over again. She felt like she was going insane. She felt like, any second now, she'd get up and find an infection form leeching off of her.

And the one thing that told her she was right was that every time she finished the six note tone, she could sweat she'd hear someone yelling out to her. Though space and time, the phrase she missed hearing her children say so often.

And, she thought, there was one she would give anything to hear him say it again.

\_ "Oly Oly Oxen Free.\_

\_ All Out in the Free\_

\_ We're all free\_."

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Alright. I've read the three reviews (thank you Newtype Omega and sanisk) and 'll replace the majority of the phonetic alphabet with numbers and letters.

If I may, I'd like to address a specific part of one review:

'At this point, I would suggest you START planning this story more carefully and ask someone to be a beta reader, because your sentences are missing some words and it will probably help you to bounce ideas

back and forth with someone. Only rarely do I find a writer who can shoot from the hip and churn out a fantastic story. (The rest have a general guideline for their story and they just fill in the details as they go.)'

I have gotten an amount of planning done but I find it difficult to write something in a slump after extensive planning. Mostly the planning I have done is (deleted because of possible spoiler), Holly's character development, and a small amount of backstory. The only thing is that, while I do need to reveal backstory, I don't want to do it without making it seem like I'm force-feeding it to you. > 1 error I didn't notice until after I read the reviews was that time breaks (represented by three asterisks) weren't very clear. This happened in the upload process and I didn't notice it till just before I started typing this up.<p>

1 error that I will point out purely for the sake of making sure you all correct me on this later. I had the word 'Private' among the first few lines and didn't realize it till now. If you all see no error, let me explain. The Spartans were Navy Enlisted Personnel with the exception of Lieutenant Commander Kurt Ambrose (Kurt-051). Private is an Army and Marine Corp Rank. The Navy equivalent would be an Apprentice, Recruit, or Seaman (changed to Shipman throughout the fic for obvious reasons). Most of the time, I'll present the lowest ranking within a squad as Apprentice because all yet to go through Training of any form are called Recruit.

Projected update date: 10 Jan 08 to 18 Jan 08. Now, PLEASE Review. (Note that Chapter 2 is finished but I need to get it through my unofficial editor and I want to give you all time to review if you so wish.)

### 3. Chapter 2 Pitfall

AHA! Another Chapter. I've taken your suggestions into account and worked to make sure that they were honored appropriately. One thing is that it feels like I'm force feeding you backstory and I don't want to do that so let me know if I should be more subtle with it.

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#### Chapter 2

#### Pitfall

"\_I'm surprised you haven't guess. They're Spartans."\_

Lieutenant Commander Kurt Ambrose

Arthur stood next to Andre, watching as Holly loaded her rifle. The retake had been scheduled for the next day, much to Arthur's satisfaction. After all, he wanted to see what Holly would do. She was denied the three practice shots that were generally taken. But she didn't complain. After all, her rifle hadn't been used by anyone else. She aligned her eye with the scope, aligned the crosshair with the black dot in the middle of the first target and fired.

The pellet flew out of the barrel and into the paper. She smiled. The

shot was perfect. The smile quickly faded though. The black dot in the center of the paper was still there. She moved the rifle slightly to the left. Her first shot had been a 6. 4 to the right of the ten. She rolled onto her side and loaded the next pellet before returning to the prone position and aligning the next shot. She bit her lip and fired again.

Another 6, 4 to the right of 10. Something was off. She moved her hand to the top of the rifle. If she was consistent then adjusting it 4 to the left would counter any error for the rest of the test. Even if she should couldn't make the perfect 300, it would still be a 292. Though it was lower than her last score, it would be something.

She grabbed the notch and twisted to find it wouldn't budge. She cursed under her breath and aligned the next shot. She bit her lip and fired again, hoping the first two was just her twitching. Another 6.

Holly was ready to break her rifle in two. The third 6 meant that, for this sheet, she had 18 out of a possible 30 for the three shots. The rifle was definitely mis-calibrated. Which meant someone had screwed with it before the match. But who? Who would want to?

She let out a heavy sigh and fired again. Her round missed the paper. 18 out of 40 for 4/10 shots at the Prone position. She took a deep breath and let it out before firing her fifth shot. Another 6. 24/50 with 5 shots left. "Why?" she asked herself, taking the sixth shot.

Arthur was smiling, watching as she took her fifth, sixth, and seventh shot. All sixes. "Well, seems she's doing well," he said.

"Petty Officer, now is not the time to be joking. She's screwing up, firing six every shot and not thinking to calibrate her weapon," Andre said, annoyance showing through his voice.

"No, she's thought about it. She just can't."

"What do you mean?"

"Her rifle's locked."

"How do you know?"

"I requested it."

Andre blinked and looked at his squad leader. "What?"

"She has a lesson she needs to learn. I requested her rifle be calibrated 8 clicks in the opposite direction of her comfort and it be locked to prevent adjustment."

"Permission to speak candidly?"

"Permission granted."

"You're an ass."

Arthur just laughed as Holly finished her last shot in the prone

position. Straight sixes with 1 miss and one that could be considered a seven. That came to a grand total of 54 or 55 of 100. A respectable score. But not the one she was hoping for. And certainly not as good as her perfect 100 in the prone position when she first took it.

She switched from prone to kneeling and raised her rifle, centering her crosshair on the target in the top right corner of the paper. She took a breath and fired. Another six, four to the right of 10. She stopped, thought for a second and aimed at the next target. "Six," she said, firing and hitting the number.

She stopped and thought for a moment. She centered the reticle and aimed for the left side of the target, at the six. She took a deep breath and fired, the pellet flying through the barrel, into the air and into the black dot in the middle. She let out a sigh of relief and continued. 16/20 for the kneeling position.

Arthur smiled and stood up, starting to walk away.

"Hey, where are you going?"

"To write something down. Her final score is going to be 250 if you want me to stay to see what it is."

"No. I want you to stay because she'd enjoy you being here."

"That's why I'm ordering you to remain here until she's talked to you. And I want you to tell her that I want to see her."

"What if she runs by me after finding out you're not here."

"Then stay here until I say otherwise."

"Arthur."

"Yes?"

"You're an ass."

"So I've heard."

(Time Break)

Arthur sat at his desk, taking notes on what had happened thus far that day. His goal was to teach Holly a lesson. And, looking at his watch, he guessed he'd find out if she'd learned it or not in about 3 minutes.

He finished writing the words 'two hundred and fifty' when there was a knock on his door. "Come in."

The doorknob twisted and the door swung open as the unusually frail Spartan walked in with a look of rage embedded into her face.

"Why'd you do that to me?"

"So Andre told you."

"Yes."

"Good, saves me some breath," he said continuing to write.

She pulled back her hand and slapped him.

His neck popped as his face moved from his notes to the right side of the room. For a brief second, he just looked that way, doing nothing. The room was quiet. He moved his hand to his neck and felt it for a brief second before moving his head so that he was looking at her. "I'm guessing that the two-fifty you got upset you."

Holly blinked as he said that. "How did you-"

"Tell me. Did you learn anything?"

"Yes. That you're an ass."

Arthur closed his eyes and tilted his head downward. "Did you learn anything that Andre hasn't already said to me?"

"No."

"Then, next time, you're doing it without a scope."

"What?"

"You heard me."

"Why, you-"

"And before you leave, I want you to knock out 200."

"For what?"

"Calling me an ass."

"Did Andre get push-ups."

"No."

"Then why do I have to do them?"

"He asked permission."

She swallowed and got to the floor in the forward leaning rest position. "Permission to begin."

"Permission granted."

She lowered herself to the ground and moved back up sounding off with "One, Petty Officer," as she did, continuing to do them, sounding off with the number she was on followed by Petty Officer each time while Arthur continued to write whatever it was he was writing when Holly had walked in.

Eventually, she finished the 200, neither of them saying a word outside of Holly's sounding off. "Permission to recover."

"Permission granted."

Holly got up and grabbed the doorknob.

"Don't leave. I'm not done with you yet."

She took a deep breath. Ground her teeth together and turned around.

"Sit down, you're going to be here a while."

She did as instructed.

He continued to write, taking notes on what she'd done, her reactions to things he'd said and specifically noted that she'd done the 200 without a word of defiance besides the considerably common 'for what'.

When he was done he got up, wheeled his chair around his desk and sat down in front of her. "Now, did you learn anything?" He mentally noted that her face was drenched in sweat.

She bit the inside of her mouth, took a deep breath, and spat in his face.

"I'm guessing that's a no." He raised his hand and wiped his face off before standing up. "Stay here, I'll be back in a moment." He got up and walked out of the room.

She figured she knew what was coming. He was going to get his PL. Report her. Have her stripped of her rank. Reassigned maybe.

He walked back in five minutes later. She was still there. He held out his hand, in it, a Styrofoam cup with a bag pinned to it. She grabbed it and looked inside of the cup. Ice water.

"Why?"

"You've earned it."

He walked back over to his desk and sat down, continuing to write while she enjoyed the cup of water. "So, learned anything?"

"To take things as they come."

"That it?"

"Yes."

"Well. The intended lesson was that sometimes, in unfavorable conditions, you have to adapt but that seems close enough."

She laughed lightly and finished the drink, standing up and walking to the door.

"What, you're not going to take your awards with you?"

"What awards?"

He turned to the first page of his notes.

"Navy Expert Rifleman Medal. Navy Rifle Marksmanship ribbon. Navy



Good Conduct medal."

"Why am I getting those?"

"My guess would be that you deserve them. Though the Good Conduct Medal is a little bit iffy."

She smiled and walked up to his desk and he pulled the plastic bag off of the cup and handed it back to her.

"Before I forget. The scorer agreed that if you shot consistently for an amount of time and \_eventually\_ started shooting 10s, he would treat the off shots leading to the 10s as 10s in lieu of you not getting any practice shots and being unable to calibrate your rifle."

"So that means that I-"

"Got your 300. Now get out of my room. At this point, you're just loitering."

"Yes, Petty Officer." she said before turning around, opening the door and running out of the squad leader's bed room as Arthur wrote down in his notes '\_And so ends day 1.'\_'

\_'Less hostile than Delia. Obviously. All 104/100 did was spit in her commander's face. Compare to Delia's initial response of intense force, leaving myself, Petty Officer First Class Spartan G088/059, with numerous injuries. Mostly because of a lack of willingness to respond to them. \_(The last sentence was added specifically for the purpose of preserving his own pride.) \_With time, she should become quite capable as both a sniper and a leader. The only real thing holding her back is her lack of willingness to accept that a negative event may have some positive influence. Though, it is only a matter of time before that is overcome.'\_

He finished his notes and put his signature on the page. \_Sierra 2.1 Golf 088/059- Arthur\_. As long as his name was, it was required by the doctor that all notes be signed with the writers name to help prevent plagiarism within the academy. Though no-one was good enough with a pen to replicate someone else's signature.

Now, all that was left, was to wait and see what the next day brought.

(Time Break)

"Andre. What's the status on Holly's Hammer?" Arthur asked his Team Leader, writing down the question he'd just asked.

"The good doctor says that another S Variant will be ready in approximately 4 Earth Days."

"Which is how long?" Arthur asked, writing down both Andre's answer and his next question.

"96 Standard Hours, Arthur."

"Holy hell," Arthur muttered, writing down the number Andre had just given him. "Look. Give her my Recon Armor. Tell her to put it on,

give it a run. It's not much different than the S Variant. The only thing is that I do not, repeat **\_\*\*DO NOT\*\*\_**, want a re-enactment of your first time in the Hammer. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes, Petty Officer."

"Good. Now. Go get Delia's S Variant Helmet from her room. I want her to wear that with my Recon. It'll give her a better idea of what it's like to be behind the targeting system in the Scout Armor." He wrote down everything that both of them had said, "And one last thing. The first two things I want her to do are salute and fire. And make damn sure that I have live camera feed to this room when she does."

"Yes Petty Officer."

"Now, do it."

Andre saluted and rushed out of the room as Arthur continued to write.

Holly flexed her fingers after she finished putting on the MJOLNIR Mk V-VI Custom/R Variant armor's body, shoulders, and legs. It was a bit too big for her. Alright, maybe more than a bit too big for her. Probably the reason why Arthur's first impression was that she was frail.

Her and her Team Leader Andre were in UNSC Navy Training Facility Lima. Better known as the pit. Currently, she was standing next to a wall that would slide open with motion to reveal a target shaped like some sort of strange... Brute seemed to be the word..

"Apprentice. Attention!" Andre yelled at Holly before she was able to put on the Hammer's helmet. Holly immediately snapped to the proper position, her arms straight down her sides, her back completely straight. And her eyes looking directly at the wall in front of her.

"Apprentice, put on your Helmet," Andre ordered her.

She bent down and grabbed the S Variant Helmet and put it over her head. After a few seconds of nothing but darkness, the Helmet came to life, a grid covering the visor for a brief moment.

"Alright, let's start with the basics. Present ARMS!" the Petty Officer Second Class yelled. Immediately, Holly's hand flew to her visor and knocked her off balance for a brief second.

Andre laughed lightly. "Alright. Now then, next step." He walked over to the wall Holly was looking at and pushed a switch. Immediately, the wall slid open to reveal a weapons rack lined with standard issue BR55HB SR Battle Rifles. He pulled one off of the rack and threw it to her. With the Armor's increased reflexes, she grabbed the rifle, did a 15 count manual and moved the position of Present Arms.

"Did you hear me to command you to spin that rifle like a toy?"

"No Petty Officer," she replied.

"Then don't. Now, if you look at your visor, you'll notice a few things. First, there's your radar. It's in the bottom left corner of

your H-U-D. That's Heads Up Display. It may save your life one day so keep a close eye on it. If you look at it now, it's disabled because it's practically useless."

She looked at the bottom left corner of her screen and saw the gray circle. "Alright. What else?"

"You'll also notice a bar at the top of your HUD. That's more likely to save your sorry ass than the radar."

"How so, Petty Officer?" she asked.

Andre laughed again and walked up to her before smacking her upside the head. Immediately, Holly noticed the bar at the top of her HUD drop to half full though she didn't feel the blow Andre had just attempted.

"It measures how much Energy Shield is left between you and the enemy. When that hits Zero, you're going to want to haul as much ass as possible and take cover till it recharges."

She nodded.

"Next, bring your weapon to ready."

She lowered the Battle Rifle from her shoulder and put her left hand under the barrel.

"You'll notice a circle just appeared in the middle of your screen. That's your crosshair. Also, in the top left of your screen is an electronic ammo count and how much spare ammo you have on your belt. If you had a second weapon, it would also show that, flashing if it has a relative small amount of ammo left. Fire the rifle 11 times and put it on your back."

She fired the rifle as instructed until there were only three rounds left of it's 36 round clip before putting the semi-automatic weapon on her back. As he had said, it's icon was flashing in the corner of her HUD.

"When your weapon is at a cease fire position, the aiming reticle, ammo counter, and extra clips will vanish. But then there's the opposite. Take the ammo off of your back and bring it closer to your face."

She did as told, looking through the weapon's scope. The armor though, seemed to completely bypass the scope, removing it's blue tint. Instead, the HUD was now a circle with 2x in the lower left and without her radar.

"Advantages, you can fire more accurately. Disadvantages, you lose your radar. This is probably the most important thing you can know considering you're taking Delia's place as Sniper. This means both of your weapons will have a scope. Normally, the Hammer automatically goes to a zoom level based on a weapon's accuracy depending on how close it is to your face and how accurate it is. Thing is, your long rifle will have a second zoom level. Understood?"

"Yes, Petty Officer."

"No you don't. Despite being a sniper, you've never handled a Long Rifle in your life. The Sniper Rifle, when brought to your face will zoom in 5 times. However, there's a switch on the side of the rifle's scope to force your armor into 10 times zoom. You'll learn more when the time comes but for now, the lesson's over. Take two steps forward and remove your Helmet. We'll continue tomorrow.

She took a step forward, another step forward and stopped, raising her arms to her head and unlocking two clasps on either side of her head to slide the helmet from it's position. Something about the Hammer made her uncomfortable though. Whether it was it just being too big or just that she wasn't used to it, she didn't know. She thought of mentioning it to Andre but decided against it, deciding to talk to Arthur about it next chance she got.

"Take your time getting out of the Hammer. Our Pelican from Rat's Nest will be here in a few hours."

"Yes, Petty Officer," she said, removing the breast plate of her Hammer.

"Tip. It's faster if you start with the shoulders. That way you can just slide your arms through the holes in the body."

"Thank you Petty Officer."

\_Alright. Not very talkative. Oddly.\_ "And one more thing. The Good Doctor is working on a new Long Rifle based on Forerunner technology found in the Shield World. Play your cards right and you might be the first to test it."

"Yes, Petty Officer."

Andre let out a heavy sigh. \_Can't get this girl to speak for the world.\_ He turned around and walked towards the fence that separated them from two Troop Transport Warthogs and a landing pad for a Pelican dropship. Any time between now and when it came, Arthur would contact him. Ask him how it went. Probably give an order to tell Holly that he wanted to see her. And at that point, the session was over with nothing else that can be done without forcing Arthur into writing a second report.

(Time Break)

"Arthur, may I ask you a question?" the frail Spartan said, looking at her squad leader.

"If you couldn't, then I wouldn't be a very good squad leader, would I?" he replied, writing down the conversation as it passed.

"I noticed that the Hammer was a little bit..."

"Uncomfortable?" Arthur finished.

"Yes."

"Happens every time. Especially to those who are claustrophobic and trying it out for the first time. A strange mix of feeling restraint and feeling freedom. It's nothing to worry about. The more time you spend in the Hammer, you more like part of you it'll feel.

Eventually, you won't even notice."

"Ok. Thank you Arthur."

"No problem. Now get out of here. You'll need your rest for tomorrow."

Holly nodded and walked out of the room, leaving Arthur there writing.

\_And thus ends Day 2. Holly is learning to use her Hammer though I doubt she'll master it in time to be able to fight effectively while wearing it. The good doctor has yet to get back to me with a report on the Flood's new behavioral scans though I can assume that whatever results she gets will not be good.\_

(Time Break)

He signed the notes with his standard \_Sierra 2.1 Golf 088/059 - Arthur \_before closing his notepad and standing up. He closed his eyes and did nothing. \_Just like when Delia died.\_

Doctor Catherine Halsey sat at her desk, writing. The Flood was a strange and confusing virus but there had to be a cure. And she'd find it if it was the last thing she did. After all, it was probably the redemption she needed at damning her children.

She shook her head to clear her mind. "It was necessary," she told herself. She remembered the 150 of them under CPO Mendez. Learning all they could from him. She remembered most of them dying when going through the augmentations. And lastly, she remembered the Shield World and the few of them that were there.

Lieutenant Commander Kurt Ambrose had made sure that no-one followed them. But no-one knew if they'd find a way out. After three years of being trapped in the Dyson Sphere, they found a way. A device left by the Forerunner. But it took longer to figure out what it did. Three more years and it became clear that if they were to get back to humanity, they would need more than one generation.

The first born were considered the strangest. They weighed anywhere in between 40 and 50 pounds, most of which being pure metal. They were, all in all, newborn Spartans. Born with most of the augmentations before receiving any of the training. And so they were trained.

With time, one of them helping the doctor figured out the device. It was a Slipstream Space generator capable of opening a hole to one of 6 Specific locations within the galaxy and one outside of it. They chose the closest to Earth. It was Installation 01, a Halo ring.

While they did find Forerunner technology and materials to begin a ship to start towards Earth, they also wound up releasing the Flood Infestation held on that ring. And that was how it began.

The good doctor cleared her head and took down four more words before leaving, whistling the four note tone everyone who was training knew.

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Alright. In the past few chapters, I've made a few changes. First, I've changed Arthur's designation. In my 2 pages of notes, I had it listed as 059 - the seventh to graduate from Basic Training - instead of 090 - the 39th. This is a major error as that would make Arthur the third most senior member of his squad and the first highest ranking. Also, I've fixed time breaks so that it is less confusing for the reader.

> One thing I want to address before it's revealed in the story as to limit confusion. Basic Training for Newborn Spartans started after encountering the flood. And just because Arthur was the 7th Spartan to finish doesn't mean that he was 7th one born. This will come up later as the main character to be will have an older brother with a designation of 188 while his designation is 118.<br> Also, some ages, to let you know the spectrum for the moment. The youngest character so far is John, who is roughly 4 or 5. Next is Holly at between 13 and 15. Followed by Andre at 16, and finally Arthur at 19. Arthur's squad leader lacked a designation as he was born pre-basic training. However, he was 22 at the time of death. Delia was 17 at the time of death. (Deleted for possible spoiler.)

I don't own Halo. I do own Delia, Holly, Andre and Arthur.

Update Zone: 16 Jan 2008 to 23 Jan 2008

End  
file.